


Cultural Heritage of the Fort Belknap Indian Community

This page was written by [Erin Klauk](#) as part of the DLESE Community Services Project: [Integrating Research in Education](#).

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The Boy and Short Man-Gros Ventre, 1900. Image by Edward S. Curtis. [Details](#)

Established in 1869, the Fort Belknap Reservation is the home to two distinct Northern Nations, the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine tribes. The reservation is located in north central Montana about 36 miles from the Canadian border, and encompasses approximately 638,000 acres of land ([Fort Belknap Indian Community of Montana \(more info\)](#)). As of 2004, there were 6,528 enrolled tribal members: 2,697 Assiniboine and 3,730 Gros Ventre ([Fort Belknap Tribal Land Department \(more info\)](#)). The tribes' economy is based on agriculture, which includes farming, ranching, and land leasing, including grazing permits. Crops include wheat, hay, and barley ([Fort Belknap Indian Community of Montana \(more info\)](#)).

The Gros Ventre, who refer to themselves as "People of the White Clay," are of Algonquin stock and closely related to the Arapaho. In the 1700's, they joined with the Blackfeet, in an alliance that continued until the mid-1800's when cultural and social factors led to warring. Following the loss of a major battle to the Blackfeet, the Gros Ventre allied with the Assiniboine ([Fort Belknap Indian Community of Montana \(more info\)](#)).

The Assiniboine, who called themselves "Nakota," meaning "The Generous Ones," are of Yanktonai Sioux ancestry ([Fort Belknap Indian Community of Montana \(more info\)](#)). They initially lived in the Rainy Lake and Land of the Woods area along the Canadian border, and moved westward to the northern plains region in the early 1700's, searching for food. To facilitate hunting, the tribe broke into two bands, one group remaining in the northern plains to hunt bison. Before 1774, the Assiniboine divided again, with some moving south and west along the Missouri River. Epidemics ravaged their numbers, necessitating an alliance with the Cree against their common enemy, the Blackfeet. The Assiniboine were traditionally considered excellent hunters and horsemen ([Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance: Ft. Belknap \(more info\)](#)).

Both tribes migrated west to Montana and Canada in the 1700's and 1800's. In 1885, a treaty was signed between the U.S. government and the Blackfeet, Flathead and Nez Perce Indians. The Gros Ventre signed the treaty as part of the Blackfeet Nation, whose territory then became common hunting grounds for all the signatures, including the Assiniboine. In 1888, by an Act of Congress, these tribes ceded 17,500,000 acres of their joint reservation and agreed to live on three smaller reservations, known as the Blackfeet, Fort Peck and Fort Belknap ([Fort Belknap Indian Community of Montana \(more info\)](#)). Today, the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine are united as one government, called the Fort Belknap Indian Community.

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Kill Spotted Horse, Assiniboiné Tribe. Photo courtesy of Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library. [Details](#)

Investigate the Culture of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation

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Fort Belknap Indian Community of Montana. This FEMA webpage is part of a larger site that works directly with the states to help plan for disasters, develop mitigation programs, and meet needs when major disasters occur. The page provides information about the location, history, disaster risks, and emergency management capacity on the Fort Belknap Reservation. ([more info](#))

Fort Belknap Reservation Information, Montana. This National Agricultural Statistics Service webpage is a 2002 census of agricultural statistics on the Fort Belknap Reservation. This dataset provides information about farms and ranches reporting at least some agricultural production during 2002, where at least one of the reported operators (out of a maximum of three) is self-identified as American Indian either exclusively or in combination with other races. Also included is a location map and a brief description of the land. ([more info](#))

Fort Belknap Tribal Land Department. This website includes information about Fort Belknap land, the northern plains history, and the history of the Fort Belknap Reservation. The detailed history of the reservation provides links to further information about the Assiniboiné tribe and Fort Belknap today. Also included is the tribal council members, a map of Fort Belknap and information about native quillwork. ([more info](#))


Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance: Ft. Belknap. This webpage includes a brief summary of the location, land status, culture, history and government of the Fort Belknap Reservation. Also included in this website is contact information for the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council and the Fort Belknap Tribal College. ([more info](#))

The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. This website provides information about the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, home to the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboiné Tribes. Included in this site is general information about the reservation, as well as the history of Fort Belknap Reservation, the Gros Ventre Tribe, and the Assiniboiné Tribe. Also

included is information about the tribal programs, the Fort Belknap Tribal College, and up to date news about Fort Belknap. ([more info](#))

Investigate the Culture of the Gros Ventre Tribe

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Gros Ventre Culture and History Links. This webpage provides information about the Gros Ventre tribe who reside on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana. Included on this site are links that lead to fact sheets about Gros Ventre culture, history, language, lifestyle, traditions, literature and arts. Also included are tribal and community links and books for sale on the Gros Ventre. ([more info](#))

The Gros Ventre Tribe of Montana. This webpage provides information about the Gros Ventre Tribe that resides on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Included on this page is general information about the tribe including history, culture, language and beliefs. Also included are links to information about the history of Fort Belknap, tribal programs, the Fort Belknap Tribal College, and current information about Fort Belknap. ([more info](#))

The Gros Ventre of Montana. This website provides information about the Gros Ventre Tribe that resides on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana. The website includes a collection of images relating to the tribe, and various links to further information about the Gros Ventre. ([This site may be offline.](#))

Investigate the Culture of the Assiniboine Tribe

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Assiniboine (Nakoda). This webpage provides information about the Assiniboine Tribe that resides on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana. The site features a detailed account of the history of the tribe. ([more info](#))

The Assiniboine Tribe of Fort Belknap. This webpage provides information about the Assiniboine Tribe that resides on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Included on this page is general information about the tribe including history, culture, language and beliefs. Also included are links to information about the history of Fort Belknap, tribal programs, the Fort Belknap Tribal College, and current information about Fort Belknap. ([more info](#))

For ideas on how to use these WebPages in a classroom, a [Study Guide](#) is provided.

[« Previous Page](#) [Next Page »](#)

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